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ABSTRACT

The school administrator should assure that every child, upon leaving school, is prepared either to take a decent job, to go on to further occupational education, or to go to college. Any feasible national policy for meeting present and future manpower needs must presuppose a major overhaul of our total structure of education. Only one in four high school students today will have any kind of occupational education, and scarcely one in ten will leave high school with entry-level skills in any occupation. New Federal legislation is being proposed that would increase emphasis on postsecondary occupational education while holding out Federal inducements to elementary and secondary schools for putting occupational orientation, counseling, and preparation (including placement) on the same footing with traditional academic preparation. (Author)

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WHAT IS THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION-AASA COMMITTEE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.

by

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Remarks for School Administrators' Panel Discussion

MR. QUIE: I am delighted to have the opportunity today to share some thoughts with you on the future role of school administrators. You may not be fortunate to have me -- but you are fortunate that you have a member of the House of Representatives rather than a Senator. These days, a United States Senator cannot clear his throat and compliment his fellow Presidential candidates in less than 20 minutes. On the House side we have a five minute rule on most speeches, so your time allowance today is three or four times my accustomed lot.

Still, I want to concentrate on one major area of concern and work a few other themes around that. Let me state it plainly at the outset: I feel that the role of a school administrator should be to assure that every single child going through a school system is prepared either to enter a decent job upon leaving school, to go on to further education to prepare for an occupation, or to go on to college. I think that the schools should be and must be just as responsible for placing a kid in a job as they are in placing him in a college. And to conclude this statement of my theme -- I do not know of any decent job with a future at this point in our history which can be filled by a functional illiterate -- even one with a high school diploma.

Now you may all react with the question: "Who in the world is a Member of Congress - a body governed by such archaic rules and practices that it cannot pass simple appropriations bills until well into the year

in which the funds are to be used -- to tell us that the schools are unresponsive to basic needs?" And I would be sympathetic. I have been one of those who has tried and will continue to try to reform Congressional procedures. But while I am not sure whether the country can much longer afford to struggle toward necessary goals weighted down with archaic governmental procedures, I am absolutely certain that vital national needs will not be filled without far-reaching reform of our educational system.

I am perfectly well aware that we Americans expect too much of our schools in some respects. We need to effectively focus a whole battery of governmental and social agencies upon the problem of individuals in our society before the schools can do their job effectively. But at the same time, I also am convinced that in many respects we expect too little of our schools. My concern is that while our schools are doing a better job than ever before for the young person preparing for an academic education, and while they are doing a better job than ever before for the young person who is preparing for an occupation, they are badly neglecting all the others. Unfortunately, "all the others" constitute a large segment of our young people.

As most of you know, I have been one of the principal Congressional sponsors of the concept of a Department of Education and Manpower. Many have questioned the combination of functions explicit in the very name of such an agency. I assure you it was deliberate, because I do not see

"education" and "manpower training" as two separate processes. I see them as different terms for the same process. Not all education or career preparation does or appropriately can take place in schools, per se, but our schools and school systems should be our principle instrument in carrying out that process.

President Nixon's recent proposal to join these functions in a new Department of Human Resources would accomplish everything I had in mind, and in addition, would join other and closely related activities. I urge your support for his proposal.

It has been said many times -- by myself and a good many others -- that we have no national manpower policy and that this bleak fact lies close to the heart of a whole host of economic and social problems which can and must be solved. Yet any rational, feasible national policy for meeting the manpower needs of today and the immediate future -- in my judgment -- must presuppose a major overhaul of our total structure of education.

Let me briefly discuss why I believe this is true, and then suggest some directions I think we should take.

To begin with, I do not believe that we are hearing increased criticism of education simply because of an increase in public expectations of what education ought to deliver. To me the whole concept of "accountability" for results is inherently desirable, and also long overdue because of promises made by the educators themselves. In the mid-1950's virtually every education group or spokesman -- and friendly supporters such as the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and other foundations -- said "Give educators

the money and they can do the job." There isn't time here for me to recite all of the promises, but they are easily documented.

Well, the American people gave you the money. This year the American people are spending about $65 billion for education at all levels, public and private; about $38 billion for public elementary and secondary schools. This is more than double the expenditures of 10 years ago; three times the expenditures of 1955; more than 7 times greater than the expenditures of 1950. With barely six percent of the world's population, we expend over one-half of all the world's educational funds.

Ladies and gentlemen, the American people have delivered; now it is time for education to fulfill all those promises.

We undoubtably will need to increase these expenditures; we certainly must reallocate them within education -- but it simply is not accurate to say that the only educational need is for more money.

While educational performance has improved dramatically in some respects, it has stood still or changed little in others. The trouble with this situation is that the world is changing so radically and so fast that gradual improvement amounts to moving backward. Consider this proposition in terms of manpower needs.

We have always had school failures and school dropouts, and we have always had high school graduates who were unprepared either for a job demanding some skills or for further education -- we call that track the "general curriculum".

Forty years ago only a third of our children graduated from high school, and less than half made it past the 9th grade. One in ten entered college. By 1945 only half of our children graduated from high school and only about one in five entered college. Today 93 percent go beyond the 9th grade; 76 percent graduate from high school; 45 percent enter college; and about 20 percent graduate with a baccallaureate degree. Doesn't this represent great progress? Isn't this close to an optimum situation? The answer to those questions could be "yes", but in manpower terms and in human terms it must be "no".

The reason for a negative answer is not hard to find and, indeed, does not even require hard analysis. Before 1945 the school dropouts and the general curriculum graduates -- leaving aside the extremes of the job market presented by depression and war -- were absorbed into the labor force. Our farms and mines and factories and construction industries required vast numbers of unskilled persons or those with skills which could be learned on the job without much academic preparation. Changes in this job market came slowly, accommodating slow adjustments to them.

So failures in education did not translate into failures in life..

All this changed after World War II. The progressive revolution in technology has proved different in kind and character from the industrial revolution from which it sprang -- and the chief difference, at least in social terms, is the rapidity of change.

Today there virtually is no market for unskilled manpower and the level of skill required for most occupations is increasing. Moreover,

even in certain service occupations and others which did not traditionally require a high literacy level, the definition of "functional literacy" also has escalated.

So failures or neglect in education translate immediately into failure in one of the most essential things in life -- the ability to make a decent living in a useful occupation.

Yet our public school expenditures this year will be less than $2 billion -- not even one dollar in sixteen -- for out-and-out vocational education. Not more than one in four high school students will have any kind of occupational education; scarcely one in ten will leave high school with entry level skills in any occupation. At the post-secondary level our capacity for any kind of occupational education lags far, far behind current needs.

The 16 - 24 year old population is 28 million, of whom some 16 million in an average month are in the civilian labor force. Yet our enrollments in publicly-supported post-secondary occupational curriculums are only about 700,000; 175,000 more are enrolled in apprenticeship programs; and about 1,200,000 in accredited private, proprietary trade, technical, and business schools. Perhaps a few more thousand are in organized education programs run by private industry. The total of these enrollments, then, is in a ratio of one to sixteen of the civilian labor force in this age bracket most in need of occupational education.

And in the midst of this accelerating revolution in technology -- less than 3 percent of our 18 - 21 population is enrolled in subprofessional technical curriculums.

Meanwhile there is the basic fact that four out of five young people will not end up with a college degree and accordingly will need other kinds of occupational preparation.

As I said, given the bare-bones facts of our situation, it requires no deep analysis to conclude that we are storing up severe trouble in economic and social dislocation in not giving occupational education its full due at all levels. That is why I was one of the major sponsors of both the 1963 and 1968 Vocational Education Acts, but they are not enough. I am working now on new Federal legislation that would vastly increase our emphasis on post-secondary occupational education while, at the same time, holding out Federal inducements for elementary and secondary schools to begin to put occupational orientation, counseling, and preparation -- including job placement and educational placement -- on the same footing with traditional academic preparation.

A school which cares more about placing a kid in Harvard than it does about placing him in a job or in a technical school is not a good school for the America of today -- and I would say that even if it succeeded in placing over half its graduates in the Harvards of this country.

Only you ladies and gentlemen can begin to change educational practices which do not fulfill either practical human needs or national manpower needs. Federal legislation such as I am proposing can help move in a new direction -- but we have yet to find any technique of legislating change. People change institutions -- and you probably are the most important people of all in American education (or at any rate, second in importance only to the taxpayer who foots the bill).

It will not be easy to head our school system in new directions; it will be particularly difficult when so many parents have succumbed to the "college or bust" fever. I think it is critical that all of us interested in this problem begin to speak out to help give occupational education a new "image" in the larger community as well as in our schools. We must somehow overcome the attitude of those who say: "Vocational education is great for my neighbor's children, but my kids are going to college."

The school administrator can help to achieve this change in image without making immediate, radical changes in the school system. Every school guidance office can reflect an equal interest in the non-college bound child, even before there is an opportunity to re-train the counselor, by giving equal emphasis and equal visibility to career and occupational information. The accomplishments of Vo-Tech graduates can be given equal prominence with those of academic graduates. Elementary school children can be introduced in dozens of ways to the working world of modern industry and technology, so they can begin to understand the vast number of interesting things there are to do in the world which do not require four years or more of college. A changed attitude in the school might very well contribute to changed attitudes in the community.

If time permitted there are other things I would like to discuss with you. Only in very recent years have we truly taken up the challenge to educate all of our children. This imposes new burdens on the schools but it also opens up new opportunities for education to serve our society. We must find ways to overcome the handicaps of impoverished environments. I

think there is little doubt that we must start very early, long before the disadvantaged child reaches kindergarten or first grade. Many of these efforts will not directly involve the schools, but schools must be involved in the total effort to reach every individual who needs help. Extensive changes in our methods of delivering social and nutritional and medical services may be needed also if we are to change effectively the delivery of educational services. I think there is altogether too much condemnation of education for failures which do not originate in the schools; but school people must be quick to recognize the need for new educational strategies to overcome these failures, whatever their origin. When failure in education means failure in life we can no longer afford it.